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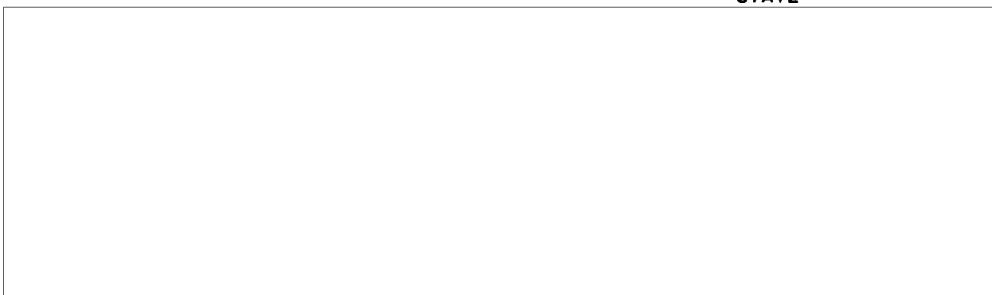
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EXDIS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: MASS, CD, FR
 SUBJECT: FRENCH MILITARY AID TO CHAD

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. WE HAVE MADE CLEAR IN SEPARATE TALKS WITH PENNE,
 GENERAL LECLERC AND THE QUAI'S ACTING AF DIRECTOR
 THAT WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM THAT LIBYANS WILL
 CEASE THEIR AIR ATTACKS ON FAYA LARGEAU. WE HAVE ALSO
 MADE THE POINT THAT THE SITUATION COULD WELL BE, OR SOON
 BECOME, MORE SERIOUS THAN THE FRENCH SEEM TO BELIEVE IT IS.

3. THE FRENCH ARE POSSIBLY ENGAGED IN ADDITIONAL PLANNING
 THAT THEY HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO INFORM US ABOUT; AT LEAST
 THEY ARE FOLLOWING THE SITUATION CLOSELY AT HIGH LEVELS.
 AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS, PENNE CHAIRED A MEETING ON CHAD
 YESTERDAY. ANOTHER ONE WAS HELD TODAY (AUGUST 2) AT HIS
 OFFICE. AS EMBOFF LEFT PENNE, WAITING IN OUTER OFFICE
 FOR HIS CHAD MEETING WERE MINISTER OF DEFENSE HERNU
 AND THE TOP BRASS OF THE FRENCH MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT,
 AS WELL AS AN ARRAY OF RANKING CIVILIANS.

4. WHILE WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO URGE A MORE
 ACTIVE FRENCH RESPONSE, WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THERE COMES A
 POINT WHEN CONTINUED U.S. PRESSURE, WHICH IMPLIES
 CRITICISM OR COERCION, COULD BECOME COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
 THE FRENCH, WE BELIEVE, WILL MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS
 WHEN THEY SEE IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO DO SO AND BASED
 ON THEIR ASSESSMENT OF WHAT IS NEEDED, NOT IN RESPONSE TO
 U.S. URGING. THE MOST EFFECTIVE ROLE WE CAN PLAY IS TO
 PROVIDE HARD INTELLIGENCE WHICH CLEARLY INDICATES THE
 DANGER AND TO STEADFASTLY DEMONSTRATE OUR SUPPORT AND
 WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN ASSISTING HABRE.

5. WE HAVE JUST BEEN INFORMED BY THE FRENCH THAT THEIR

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State Dept. review completed

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SOURCES AT FAYA ARE NOW REPORTING THAT THE LIBYAN BOMBING IS BEING CONDUCTED AT A LOWER LEVEL AND HAS BECOME MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE. THERE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLE LOSSES AND PARTS OF THE TOWN ARE AFLAME.

6. BASED ON COMMENTS MADE TO US AT THE DESK OFFICER LEVEL AT THE QUAI, A DECISION ON MORE DIRECT FRENCH INTERVENTION MAY BE BEFORE THE PRESIDENT. HOWEVER, NONE OF OUR HIGHER-LEVEL CONTACTS HAS SO INDICATED.

7. WE MUST KEEP IN MIND THAT THE FRENCH HAVE ALREADY EXTENDED THEMSELVES CONSIDERABLY IN CHAD AND ARE DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH WEAPONS SUPPLY, ADVISORS AND OTHER PERSONNEL. AS MUCH AS WE WANT THE FRENCH TO INTERVENE DIRECTLY, THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT DECISION FOR PRESIDENT MITTERRAND TO TAKE. THE REASONS ARE WELL KNOWN, BUT PERHAPS WORTH REPEATING. FOR A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT TO SEND FRENCH TROOPS INTO ACTION IN AFRICA IS TO SWALLOW MANY YEARS OF SOCIALIST CRITICISM OF GISCARD FOR MILITARY ADVENTURISM ON THAT CONTINENT. SECONDLY, THE FRENCH SEE THEMSELVES PUTTING THEIR INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION ON THE LINE WHEN THEY SEND IN THE JAGUARS. THEY ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO FRENCH PRESTIGE SHOULD A LIBYAN PILOT DOWN A JAGUAR. AS ONE RANKING OFFICIAL POINTED OUT, PUTTING IN THE JAGUARS EVEN WITH COVER AIRCRAFT WOULD BE A LIMITED OPERATION WITHOUT MUCH BACKUP. THE OFFICIAL DREW THE DISTINCTION TO THE GULF OF SIDRA INCIDENT WHERE THE U.S. NAVY AND ITS PLANES WERE CLOSE AT HAND. AND FINALLY, HABRE STILL SUFFERS FROM THE CLAUSTRE AFFAIR AND THE MURDER OF THE FRENCH EMISSARY.

8. FOR NOW, WE BELIEVE OUR BEST TACTIC IS TO STEADILY ENCOURAGE THE FRENCH IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT TO LET THEM REACH THEIR OWN DECISIONS, WHICH WILL BE BASED ON FRENCH WEIGHING OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND NOT ON WHAT THEY COULD VIEW AS UNNECESSARY U.S. PRESSURE.

9. MINIMIZE NDJAMENA CONSIDERED. MARESCA
END OF MESSAGE SECRET

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